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State of Illinois Encourages Veterans and Service Members to “Know Your Rights”

Illinois Department of Human Rights highlights anti-discrimination protections available under state law

CHICAGO – Illinois Department of Human Rights Director Janice Glenn today issued a reminder of the anti-discrimination protections available under the Illinois Human Rights Act to active duty service members and veterans of the armed forces. State law prohibits discrimination based on military status and also protects employers from discrimination complaints if they establish a hiring preference for veterans.

“While we come together as a nation and state to recognize the commitment made by our veterans, it is important to publicize the strong legal protections available in Illinois to those who have served, including freedom from unlawful discrimination,” said Director Glenn. “I encourage both veterans and those on active duty to familiarize themselves with the legal rights available to them, particularly for employment.”

The Illinois Human Rights Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against an individual based on their military status in regards to employment, real estate transactions, or access to public accommodations and financial credit. These protections are available to veterans or active duty members of the armed forces of the United States, reserve components, and the Illinois National Guard.

“An example of the rights available under Illinois law is that an employer cannot refuse to either hire or promote an employee who serves as a reservist, based on the potential that they could be called onto active duty during their time of employment,” added Director Glenn. “Those serving our country with the United States armed forces or Illinois National Guard should not feel that their employment can be threatened by their commitment.”

Under recently enacted Illinois law, employers are also protected in their ability to establish preferences in the employment of veterans. The Veterans Preference in Private Employment Act empowers private employers to establish a preference for hiring veterans, as long as there is a publicly posted policy that is applied uniformly for all employment decision regarding the hiring, promotion or retention of employees.

“Employers are beginning to discover that hiring veterans is a smart business decision,” said Erica Jeffries, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs. “Not only do veterans deserve an opportunity for employment, they bring to the table a much stronger work ethic and sense of loyalty than other potential candidates. Additionally, veterans are generally able to adapt more quickly in unfamiliar environments, which shortens their transition time and saves

companies money on training and retention. Thanks to this new Act, employers can choose to set a hiring preference for our veterans; and veterans will have an opportunity to excel knowing their new organization understands and respects their service.”

For more information on anti-discrimination protections, visit www.illinois.gov/dhr.

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